Lung Cancer Opinion Given

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In a deposition read Wednesday in federal court a researcher at the world's largest cancer research and treatment center stated that it is his opinion that the more a person smokes, the greater the person's risk of getting lung cancer.

The deposition of Dr. Ernest L. Wynder of the New York Memorial Cancer hospital and the Sloan-Kettering institute was read during the trial of the case in which a Houston widow is seeking to prove that the lung cancer from which her husband died was caused by his smoking.

Dr. Wynder is in charge of the section of epidemiology at the New York cancer center. That section includes both clinical studies and biological and chemical research. He is also active in the practice of medicine, the deposition stated.

5 TYPES OF EVIDENCE

Epidemiology, according to the deposition, is a study of diseases as they occur in various population groups and an attempt to find out why different diseases occur at different rates in different population groups.

Five types of evidence have been considered in his studies of lung cancer, the doctor stated in the deposition which was taken in New York on Aug. 3, 1960.

The first was called presumptive evidence "where we know that lung cancer, which used to be a most uncommon disease, has today become the most common cause of cancer death in the American male."

He said that a factor must be sought for the increase and that a number of factors have increased in the United States, one of which has been cigarette consumption.

CIGARETTE SMOKE

Lung cancer has increased primarily in men, the deposition reveals, and to a far lesser extent in women.

"Therefore," he said, "we seek a factor to which men have been exposed more than women. This would nearly exclude air pollution, since women in our cities are exposed as much to city air as are men. However, national statistics clearly show men have smoked cigarettes for a far longer period of time than women."

He added that as part of what is called presumptive evidence is the fact that when a smoker inhales deeply up to 90 per cent of the smoke is retained in the lungs.

One of the established facts in cancer research, he claimed, is that a great many of the substances in cigarette smoke are carcinogenic or induce cancer.

Another type of evidence, he asserted in the deposition, is epidemiological. In studies of this type, "the most striking fact to us was the rarity with which lung cancer occurred among non-smokers, and the fact that about one-fourth of lung cancer patients smoked about two packs a day."

OCCUPATIONAL FACTOR

Regarding the occupational factor, the researcher said that a number of occupations were found, including metal workers, painters and cabinet makers in which an increased risk of lung cancer was found, but these could make up only a small percentage of the total lung cancer cases in this country.

RATE PREDICTED BY DATA, VIEW

Since 1950, studies conducted by Dr. Wynder at the New York center on lung cancer patients have resulted in the finding that the more a person smokes, the greater the person's risk of developing lung cancer, according to the deposition.

The doctor termed "one of the intriguing leads" the fact that lung cancer is far more common among males than among females. Very few women have been found who have smoked at least a pack of cigarettes a day for the past 20 years compared to men, he said. And he claimed that an analysis showed that the present sex ratio of lung cancer is entirely consistent with the long-term smoking habits of the two sexes.

Population studies show that the risk of lung cancer increases sharply with the amount of cigarette smoke "and you can predict the rate of lung cancer in a given population upon knowing what the cigarette consumption in that given population is," he asserted.

MICE, RABBITS

In connection with biological evidence relied upon by researchers, Dr. Wynder testified that cigarette smoke condensate placed on the skin of mice and rabbits produces cancer in a certain percentage of cases.

The deposition revealed that when the witness was turned over by H. Alva Brumfield, the plaintiff's attorney, for cross-examination, he replied to defense attorney Frederick Haas that in a 1950 study 40 per cent of the lung cancer patients were non-smokers, but that the percentage was based on 10 out of 25 cases only.

UNDERSTANDING IS ARGUED

He also admitted that he has stated that epidermoid cancer of the lung occurs in non-smokers, but he called it "a rare entity."

The doctor also testified that he has considered factors other than smoking in his studies and that not all of the factors are necessarily understood.

". . . In effect, we say today that we do not necessarily understand all of the factors that play a role in the development of lung cancer in anybody or of any other cancer," he asserted.

The researcher admitted that cancer is a disease of many causes, when questioned on this point by Haas.

"As late as 1956, isn't it the fact that you felt that 'The cause of cancer has puzzled men for generations and to our present knowledge there is no single cause?' " Haas asked.

EXPLAINS STATEMENT

"He admitted that he made the statement in 1956 and added: "I still say today that the total information and all the answers to the cancer problem, of course, are still a puzzle to man. But when we speak about total causation, this applies to nearly any other disease."

He pointed out that every person exposed to tuberculosis bacillus will not necessarily develop tuberculosis. "By the same argument," he said, "you may say that therefore we don't know anything about the development of tuberculosis, just because we do not know all of the factors that cause tuberculosis."

Asked if he believed all other factors involved in the causation of lung cancer have been ruled out, Dr. Wynder said: "We believe that we have ruled in several other factors besides smoking, though we have always stated that smoking was the most important cause."

NOT EVERY SMOKER DEVELOPS CANCER

The witness testified that he has always believed that there must be some element of predisposition, "because obviously not every smoker develops cancer."

Court was recessed by Judge Herbert W. Christenberry before the lengthy deposition could be read in full. Its reading will be continued at 10 a. m. Thursday.

The first person called to the witness stand Wednesday morning was the plaintiff, Mrs. Victoria St. Pierre Lartigue, whose husband, Frank J. Lartigue, died on July 13, 1955 at the Veterans Administration hospital in Houston, Tex., at the age of 65.

Mrs. Lartigue testified as to her husband's smoking habits, calling him "a slave to his cigarettes."

She said that when she first met him in 1913 he was smoking Picayune cigarettes and cigarettes rolled from King Bee tobacco. In the 1940s. she said, he began smoking Camel cigarettes also.

The witness testified that she married Lartigue in 1917 and lived in Beaumont, Tex., for a while when he was in the insurance business. In 1934 they moved to Hot Springs, Ark., when he began suffering from rheumatic pains.

WAS CHAIN SMOKER

During all of their married life, she said, be smoked two packages of cigarettes a day and lit one from the other.

"He couldn't do without them. Many a time I begged him not to smoke," she said.

Mrs. Lartigue told the court that her husband never learned to drive an automobile and that for many years when he was working as a collector for a finance company she drove him around. Sometimes the smoke in the car became so bad she had to open the window during the winter, she added.

She said that even in their apartment the smoke became so oppressive at times that she had to open the windows.

Under cross examination by Harry McCall Jr., a defense attorney, Mrs. Lartigue said that while her husband was in the Army during World War I he suffered from shortness of breath and could not drill.

Mrs. Lartigue's suit is against the Liggett and Myers Tobacco Company and the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company. She is seeking $150,000 for her husband's death.

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